

MTA-7010
8 April 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
THROUGH: Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT: Monthly Report -- Tel Aviv Bureau -- March 1987

I. GENERAL

1. In an apparent reaction to the recent attention devoted to the Pollard case in both Israel and the U.S., the Israeli press began to focus on the "intelligence gathering" activities of the U.S. Embassy. This path led almost inevitably to Tel Aviv Bureau. On 13 March, an article in the HA'ARETZ weekend supplement described the Bureau as "the Israeli station of the CIA." This was followed on the 20th by an article in the weekly HA'IR that not only described the precise location of the Bureau, but included an interview with the Embassy public affairs officer in which the latter acknowledged that FBIS was part of the CIA. This article was summarized on a popular radio show the next morning. The Bureau did not have to wait long for the results of this media attention; the day after the HA'IR article was published the bureau received two visits by curious individuals, the second of which left an envelope at the door marked "sinister subversion worldwide." Embassy security guards later determined that the envelope was empty. Following these visits, bureau requested that one of the Embassy contract security guards be assigned to FBIS until the media interest dies down. As of this writing there have been no further incidents or exposures.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Turkey and Greece put their armed forces on alert and hostilities appeared imminent on 27 March when it was reported that the Turkish exploration vessel "Sismik-1," escorted by warships, was to conduct oil exploration work in disputed Aegean waters. The Turkish Section put Ankara radio on open speaker watch and the Bureau remained open 2 hours beyond normal COB on the 27th and opened one half hour early on the 29th and the 30th to take the 0430 GMT Ankara Domestic Service cast live. The tension eased on 29 March after assurances from the Turkish prime minister that the "Sismik-1" would stay out of disputed waters as long as the Greeks refrained from prospecting in these areas.

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2. [] BBC Monitoring Service's Assistant Editor (News), visited the Bureau from 8 to 11 March. [] met with each of the bureau sections and with the editorial staff. In discussions with Bureau editors, [] stressed the high interest in reportage on Israel and Turkey and observed that almost all items on these countries are of potential interest to the BBC Newsroom. He urged editors to make liberal use of higher precedence, citing long delays in transmission of material sent at routine precedence. Bureau editors agreed to make more liberal use of dual precedence on items considered to be of interest to the BBC.

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3. Effective 29 March, Tel Aviv's Turkish Section assumed coverage of the two daily Moscow Turkish casts from the BBC, in line with an agreement reached at the last FBIS/BBC coordination meeting.

4. The Turkish Section assumed coverage of the Turkish dailies Milliyet and Cumhuriyet from 10 to 26 March to permit Nicosia Bureau's Turkish press monitor to take leave.

B. Lateral Services

1. On 11 March, the Israeli Inner Cabinet met to discuss the Pollard affair. An official communique issued after the meeting announced the formation of a two-member fact-finding committee to investigate the issue. At the Embassy's request, bureau editor [] dictated the text of the communique to the Political Section for inclusion in an immediate State cable.

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2. At Austria Bureau's request, Bureau contacted the Hungarian Monitor candidate selected as a result of the tests and interviews conducted by Tel Aviv Bureau in December-January, and initiated administrative processing.

3. Responding to a request from NEAD, bureau provided information on West Bank settlement publications, including orientation, editorial personnel, content, and availability. NEAD expressed appreciation for the Bureau efforts.

C. Technical

1. Because of temporary trouble with Bureau's only Comscribe programming keyboard, Bureau engineer [] was obliged to devise an alternate means of programming the Comscribe units. His simple and effective solution is a potential time-saver for all bureaus using the Comscribe units. [] used one of the bureau's IBM/PC's to program the Comscribe unit by configuring the PC using "Crosstalk" communications software and an RS232 cable. Apart from realizing the initial aim of freeing the bureau from total reliance on the single Comscribe programming keyboard, this very simple approach also permits automatic programming of Comscribes -- each Comscribe configuration used at a given bureau can be stored on diskette and reused, saving operator programming time, eliminating keying errors, and providing records of how each Comscribe is set up. The technique also permits remote programming.

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2. Bureau experienced intermittent trouble with the Communication Section IBM PC/XT characterized by periodic failure to load and execute Bach. After extensive investigation Bureau engineer concluded that the evidence pointed to progressive failure of the hard disk. Upon being informed of the symptoms and the bureau's diagnostic efforts, ADD promptly sent a replacement hard disk by air express. As of this writing the disk has not cleared customs.

D. Cruising

1. Cruising Monitor [] assisted by Hebrew/Arabic monitor [] conducted a cruising survey of Cairo Television's first program from 2 to 9 March. Unfortunately, the survey dates coincided with the winter's worst propagation conditions. Even with bureau's upgraded antenna hardware, reception ranged from fair to unmonitorable and the survey results were less than optimal. Bureau plans a new survey in late April.

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III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. Hebrew Arabic Monitor [] announced his intention to resign effective the end of the month to take a job as a partner in an architectural firm.

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2. Teletypist [] announced that she plans to resign at the end of May.

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3. Early in the month, Teletypist [] announced that due to the impact of shift-work on her family she was applying for a vacancy in the Embassy Visa Section. The Visa Section subsequently announced that [] had been chosen to fill the vacant position; however, after some scrambling, the bureau was able to retain [] by offering her the position of system administrator when phase 1 of field bureau automation begins.

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4. Teletypist [] was awarded a QSI effective 20 March for her sustained superior performance in the Communications Section, raising her grade to FBN-5/2.

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5. On 4 March, the State Department advised the Embassy that wage increases for FSN's based on the November/December 86 spot wage survey had been approved retroactive to 7 December 86. While the average increase was said to be 14.4 percent, the actual increases varied considerably from grade to grade. For example, the increases for bureau's FBN-06's and FBN-07's amounted to 4.9 and 6.8 percent respectively, while the increases for FBN-08's and FBN-09's were 24.3 and 23.4 percent respectively. As might be expected, Bureau employees in the lower grades were deeply dissatisfied. Ironically, these are the employees that bureau is having the most trouble retaining.

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IV. VISITS

1. The bureau chief and deputy chief paid a followup visit to the commercial satellite monitoring facility in Herzliyya on the 4th. (The initial visit by Bureau engineer, technicians, and cruising monitor on 22 December 1986, was described in Tel Aviv Bureau's December monthly report.) The vendor provided a tour of his operation and discussed his main sources, notably Tehran, Ankara, and Algiers TV, and Arabsat. He provided a demonstration of his Tehran TV reception, which is excellent. The vendor provided several sample Tehran TV tapes. These included video of a Khomeyni appearance reported to have occurred that morning (4 March). The tapes were pouched to Headquarters. The bureau chief and the deputy chief were very impressed by the vendor's equipment, expertise, and results.

2. BBC Monitoring Service Assistant Editor (News) [] [] visited the bureau from 8 to 12 March. [] was given a tour of the bureau and met with monitors and editors.

3. Bureau Chief [] left for the Bureau Chiefs Conference on 20 March.

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V. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

1. Cruising Monitor [] participated with distinction in the annual Diplomatic tennis tournament at the Dan Accadia Hotel, taking third prize in the Men's singles, and second place in the mixed doubles. In addition, an all-FBIS team made up of [] and [] was narrowly defeated in the finals of the Men's doubles, and had to settle for second place.

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Acting Chief, FBIS Tel Aviv Bureau

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cc: JN, NC

Attachments: a. Production Report
b. Communications Report